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A man walks among earthquake rubble as he searches for survivors in a destroyed building in Adana, Turkey on Monday (L); and rescue operations in full swing in Syria | AP/AFP

THE MINUTE-LONG TREMOR COULD BE TURKEY'S LARGEST

First quake centred north of Gaziantep in Turkey. It struck at 4.17 am local time and lasted about a minute. It could be Turkey's largest so far

A strong 6.7 aftershock came 10 minutes later. Tremors from the quake were felt as far away as Greenland. It was also felt in Egypt, Lebanon and Cyprus. Tsunami warning was briefly issued in Italy

SECOND QUAKE WAS NOT AN AFTERSHOCK

The 7.5-magnitude second quake struck at 1.24 pm local time, around 95 km north of the first quake. Officials said it was not an aftershock

2,800 rescue teams have been deployed in Turkey. The nation's armed forces have set up an air corridor to enable search and rescue teams to reach the affected zones. At least 22 countries are rushing aid

2,600 KILLED AND COUNTING

• U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WARNS FATALITIES COULD EVEN CROSS 10,000 • EARTHQUAKE WAS 18 KM DEEP • RACE AGAINST TIME TO RESCUE VICTIMS • INDIA TO SEND TWO NDRF TEAMS COMPRISING 100 PERSONNEL

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

A monster 7.8 magnitude earthquake in the wee hours of Monday — followed by another 7.5 about 10 hours later — rocked Turkey and Syria toppling hundreds of buildings and killing over 2,600 people and leaving many others injured. The toll is expected to go up as hundreds are still trapped under rubble.

It was a cold, rainy and snowy night when the pre-dawn quake struck, reducing buildings to piles of pancaked floors on both sides of the border.

Thousands of buildings collapsed in a wide area extending from Syria's cities of Aleppo and Hama to Turkey's Diyarbakir, more than 330 km to the northeast. A hospital collapsed in the coastal city of Iskenderun in Turkey. Casualties were reported from at least 10 provinces in Turkey.

The epicentre was in Turkey's province of Kahramanmaras. It sent residents of Damascus rushing into the streets, jolted awake people in their beds in Beirut, and was felt in faraway Cairo.

"Because the debris removal efforts are continuing in many buildings in the earthquake zone, we do not know how high the number of dead and injured will rise," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

Hundreds of families remained trapped in rubble in Syria, an emergency organisation, called the White Helmets, run by the country's opposition said in a statement.

The Turkey-Syria region sits on top of major fault lines and frequently experiences quakes. As many as 18,000 were killed in a similarly powerful earthquakes that hit Turkey in 1999.

Researchers said Monday's earthquake was a strike-slip quake, where two tectonic plates slide past each other horizontally, instead of moving up and down. They said it was one of the biggest strike-slip quakes in the world.

At the United Nations, diplomats from the 193 member countries stood in silent tribute to victims of the earthquake. Offers of help poured in from across the globe, including India, Britain, the European Union and NATO.

India will send two teams of National Disaster Response Force comprising 100 personnel with specially trained dog squads and necessary equipment to help expedite the search and rescue operations.

Medical teams are also being readied with trained doctors and paramedics with essential medicines. Relief material will be dispatched in coordination with the Government of Republic of Türkiye and Indian Embassy in Ankara and Consulate General office in Istanbul.

"Anguished by the loss of lives and damage of property due to the earthquake in Turkey. Condolences to the bereaved families. May the injured recover soon. India stands in solidarity with the people of Turkey and is ready to offer all possible assistance to cope with this tragedy," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Principal Secretary to the PM held a high-level meeting in South Block to discuss immediate relief measures.

THOUSANDS HOMELESS: P12

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, flanked by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, releases a jacket made from pet bottles during the inauguration of the India Energy Week in Bengaluru on Monday | EXPRESS

PM lays out 4-pronged strategy to boost energy sector

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a major push for the energy sector in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday laid out a four-pronged strategy while appealing to global and domestic investors from the exploration and production (E&P) sector to invest in the country.

Inaugurating the India Energy Week 2023 here, the prime minister explained four major verticals for the strategy for the energy sector: increasing domestic exploration and production; diversifying the supply; expanding fuels like biofuel, ethanol, compressed biogas and solar; and de-carbonisation via electric vehicles and hydrogen.

Modi said India is working to enhance petrochemical production capacity, and asked the industry leadership to utilise technology and the startup ecosystem to expand their energy landscape.

He said 'no-go' restrictions on oil exploration and production on up to 10 lakh square kilometre area were lifted, and appealed to investors "to make use of these opportunities, and increase your presence in the exploration of fossil fuels." He pointed out that the E&P sector had shown interest in the areas that were hitherto inaccessible.

Justifying the need for more investments in the energy sector, Modi pointed at the increasing need and demand for energy in the country in the near future with a rapid pace of development expected to result in new cities being developed. Quoting International Energy Association, the Prime Minister said India's energy demands will be highest in the present decade which presents an opportunity for the investors and stakeholders of the energy sector.

P4

PM unveils new HAL facility near Tumakuru

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Tumakuru

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday took a veiled dig at the Opposition which had accused his government of ignoring Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in the Rafale fighter jet deal. He was addressing a public rally after dedicating HAL's new Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) manufacturing facility spread across 615 acres, for which he had laid the foundation stone in 2016, at Bidarehallakaval near Tumakuru.

Indirectly referring to the Opposition Congress' campaign in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls when the party targeted his government over Rafale deal, the PM said that false propaganda to target the government has been defeated and those behind it are exposed.

"Falsehood, no matter how big, frequent or high, is always defeated in the face of truth. This factory and the rising strength of HAL has exposed the purveyors of falsehood. Reality is speaking for itself", the PM remarked. He slammed the Opposition for making it an issue inside and outside the Parliament.

"Today, the same HAL is making Tejas for Indian armed forces and is a centre of global attraction, bolstering India's Atmanirbharta (self-reliance) in the defence sector", he remarked.

He stressed that the spirit of 'Nation First' will assure the twin success of revamping the public sector enterprises and opening up opportunities for the private sector.

Adani prepays $1.14 bn for release of pledged shares

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

IN a bid to salvage investor confidence amid huge market value erosion, billionaire Gautam Adani and family have prepaid $1.1 billion worth of loans that were taken by pledging shares of Adani group firms. The group had time till September 2024 to repay the loans.

"In light of recent market volatility and in continuation of the promoters' commitment to reduce the overall promoter leverage backed by Adani shares, we are pleased to inform that promoters have posted the amounts to prepay $1,114 million ahead of maturity of September 2024," a company statement read. With this, over 200 million shares in three Adani group firms — 168.27 mn shares of Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) representing 12% of the promoters' holding, 27.56 mn shares (3% of promoters' holding) in Adani Green Energy and 11.77 mn (1.4%) in Adani Transmission — will be released.

The promoter family owns 65.13% in APSEZ, of which 17.31% is pledged, according to BSE data updated till December 31. The promoter's stake in Adani Green Energy is 60.75% (pledge: 4.36%) and 74.19% in Adani Transmission (pledge: 6.62%).

The ports-to-power conglomerate has been under fire and lost nearly ₹10 lakh crore in market capitalisation in just eight sessions after US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research published a scathing report alleging fraud and stock price manipulation. The relentless stock rout had also triggered concerns of the group's ability to meet debt obligations. The latest move by the promoters is aimed to address such concerns.

The Adani Group's gross debt is estimated at about ₹2 lakh crore.

EXPRESS READ

137 nursing students fall ill in Mangaluru

Mangaluru: In a suspected case of food poisoning, 137 nursing students fell ill and have been admitted to various hospitals in Mangaluru. According to sources, the students, who took ill at a nursing college hostel in Shaktinagar, are out of danger. P5

ISRO, IIT-M ink deal for manned space mission

Bengaluru: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM), to help create a training module for the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme. P5

Boy falls off train near Hassan, dies a day later

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

In a tragic incident, a five-year-old boy, who fell off a running train, reportedly died a painful death after being alive for almost a day. The deceased, **CA Yojith,** was found bleeding profusely in the bushes with his right leg cut off below the knee just before he breathed his last. He was lying unattended in a dense forest, gasping for breath. When found, he was in an unconscious state. After he was shifted to the nearest government hospital, he was declared brought dead.

The incident occurred between Hassan and Mavinikere railway stations on Tuesday (January 31).

The boy's mother, HS Savitha, a homemaker, was travelling with him to Mysuru. The family hails from Kadur village in Chikkamagaluru district. The duo was travelling in an unreserved compartment of the Shivamogga-Talaguppa Exp from Kadur on January 30, when the tragedy struck.

The boy's father, CH Anand Kumar, who worked in a real estate firm in Bengaluru before moving to Mysuru with his family to pursue his LLB degree, told TNIE, "My baby had asked for biscuits which my wife gave to him. She was then trying to keep the biscuits in a bag in the luggage rack at the top. I am given to understand that he was eating the biscuits and walked away from her. They were in the second seat from the door which was open. He must have slipped and fallen out."

Government Railway Police (GRP) sources said that the mother told them that she heard a big thud. P5

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> CH Anand Kumar, boy's father